Eur Polit Sci (2019) 18:309–334
https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-018-0187-2

RESARCH DATASET

Disagreeable narcissists, extroverted psychopaths, and elections: a new dataset to measure the personality of candidates worldwide

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Published online: 7 September 2018

Abstract Scholars pay increasing attention to the personality of candidates. However, systematic and comparative data across different countries and electoral systems are virtually inexistent. I introduce here a new dataset with information about the personality of 124 candidates having competed 57 elections worldwide. I describe the candidates' personality in terms of two sets of traits which provide a comprehensive representation of adult personality: the "socially desirable" traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness ("Big Five"), and the "socially malevolent" traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism ("Dark Triad"). Beyond introducing these measures, and testing their validity and reliability, I present three sets of analyses suggesting that these variables are also relevant. My findings suggest several trends: (1) concerning the profile of candidates, populists score significantly lower in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, but higher in perceived extraversion, narcissism, and psychopathy than "mainstream" candidates; (2) looking at the content of their campaigns, candidates high in agreeableness and openness tend to be associated with campaigns that are less negative and harsh, but more based on positively valenced appeals. At the same time, extroverted tend to be associated more with character attacks. Finally, (3) looking at electoral success, high conscientiousness and openness seem associated with better results during the election, whereas extraversion could be counterproductive.

Keywords Big Five · Candidates · Dark Triad · Dataset · Elections · Expert survey · Personality

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-018-0187-2) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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Introduction

The contemporary trend towards the "personalization" of politics (Van Zoonen and Holtz-Bacha 2000) suggests that candidates' characteristics beyond their political profile participate to define their image and "marketability", even in legislative elections (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Although some studies contest the presumed centrality of political leaders in democratic politics and voting processes (e.g. King 2002; Curtice and Holmberg 2005), much evidence exists that candidates' characteristics can be a powerful heuristic tool for voters, especially under conditions of low motivation and incomplete information. Many studies suggest that voters take the "personality" of candidates into account when deciding whom to vote for (Caprara and Zimbardo 2004; Anderson and Brettschneider 2003; Bittner and Peterson 2018; Vitriol et al. 2018).

A few examples come easily to mind when thinking of candidates with unique personalities: many seem to agree that Donald Trump displays "a messiah complex, no conscience" (Hoise 2017), exhibits "low agreeableness [… and] grandiose narcissism" (McAdams 2016), and could even "present a diagnosis of psychopathy" (Olbermann 2016). On the other side of the pond, British PM Theresa May is often portrayed as a dull person having "all the warmth of a wet weekend" on the seaside (Mcleod 2017) and "the emotional intelligence of the Terminator" (Kurd 2017). Somewhat similarly, her German counterpart Angela Merkel is known for her calm, disciplined, and pragmatic style, but also for having a relatively uncharismatic personality; she is often described as "reserved, rational, and uninspiring" (Hung 2012), having a public speaking style "as inspiring as the Eurozone quarterly growth figures" (Butler 2013), and lacking "passion and an emphasis on feelings [… but displaying a] technocratic and sober style of governance" (Göpffarth 2017). Radically different is the reputation of Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch far-right *Party for Freedom* (PVV), often compared to Trump perhaps due to his "bizarre bouffant platinum hairdo […and his willingness to test] the standards of permissible speech" (Traub 2017), but mostly because of his alleged "controversial attitude and aberrant political style" (De Landsheer and Kalkhoven 2014) and because he is "not trying at all to be agreeable" (McBride 2017).

These colourful examples suggest, indirectly, that the personality of political figures matters (Bittner 2011; Costa Lobo 2018; Clifford 2018). Certainly, Merkel reaped electoral benefits from her reputation as a conscientious and stable person, and that was definitely what May hoped for as well when she accepted the job in 2016, and who would disagree that Trump's and Wilders' brash political style grants them a spot in the limelight and, perhaps, explains part of their appeal? Personality matters, and personality sells. Unfortunately, research in the personality of political figures still lacks an integrated framework, and most studies are limited to selected traits as, e.g. narcissism (Watts et al. 2013), psychopathy (Lilienfeld et al. 2012), or intellectual brilliance (Simonton 2006); only a handful of studies rely on integrated sets of traits (Rubenzer et al. 2000; Visser et al. 2017; Nai and Maier 2018).

Furthermore, large-scale comparative evidence is virtually inexistent, which makes hard to advance global claims related to the existence of personality "styles" in politics or concerning the electoral success of personality profiles.

This article contributes to this developing field of research by introducing a new dataset (NEG^{ex}) that provides measures of personality reputation, based on expert ratings, for 124 candidates having competed 57 elections worldwide between June 2016 and March 2018. The dataset includes information about elections in virtually all regions of the globe, from the USA to Western Europe (e.g. France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, UK, the Netherlands), Northern Europe (Finland, Norway, Iceland), Oceania (Australia, New Zealand), the African continent (e.g. Zambia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Lesotho, Rwanda, Kenya), Eastern Europe (e.g. Russia, Czech Republic, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Georgia), the Balkans (e.g. Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo), Eastern Asia (e.g. Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong), and Latin America (e.g. Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua). These elections span across all types of electoral and party systems and vary considerably in terms of competitiveness, closeness of the results, and media coverage. The dataset includes measures about the personality profile for a wide range of candidates having competed in these elections, including (but not limited to) world key players as Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton (USA), Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn (UK), Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron (France), Angela Merkel and Alexander Gauland (Germany), Silvio Berlusconi, Matteo Salvini and Luigi Di Maio (Italy), Geert Wilders (the Netherlands), Norbert Hofer (Austria), Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev (Russia), Shinzo Abe (Japan), Hassan Rouhani (Iran), Mariano Rajoy and Pablo Iglesias (Spain), and many others. Appendix A presents the complete list of elections and candidates covered in this release of the data.

The data measure the personality profile for those 124 candidates via two integrated sets of traits that provide a comprehensive representation of adult personality: the "socially desirable" traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness (the "Big Five"; Gerber et al. 2011; Mondak 2010), and the "socially malevolent" traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (the "Dark Triad"; Paulhus and Williams 2002; Jonason 2014). After introducing the dataset in the next section, I discuss the *reliability* and *validity* of the personality measures and then present the results of three sets of analyses that I use to highlight the empirical and theoretical relevance of my personality measures. I first assess whether populists differ from non-populists in terms of personality reputation, then the extent to which candidates with certain personality profiles are more likely to go "negative" and "emotional" during their electoral campaigns, and finally whether personality drives electoral success. Overall, the results suggest that the variables presented in this article are *relevant* and contribute to explain political dynamics.

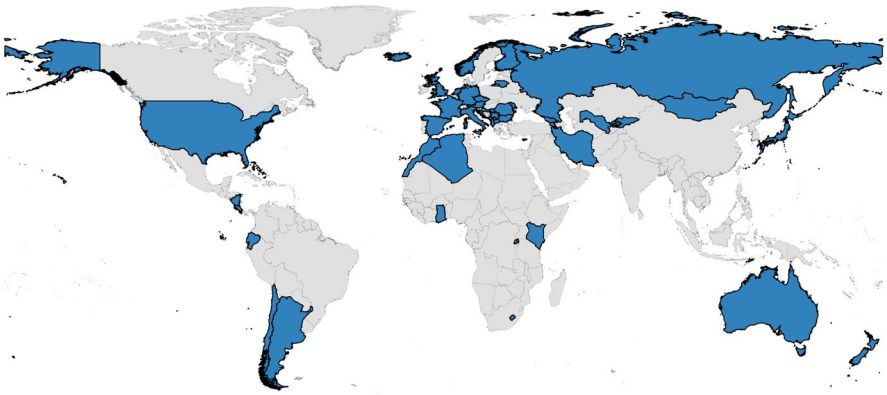

Fig. 1 Dataset current coverage: world map

A new dataset to measure the personality of candidates (and more)

The data

The 1.0 release of the NEG^{ex} (Negative Campaigning Comparative Expert Survey) dataset[1] covers all national elections held across the world between June 2016 and March 2018; data are gathered through a standardized survey (in English) distributed in the aftermath of each election to national and international experts in elections and electoral behaviour. I asked experts to evaluate several dimensions of communication style and personality reputation for the 2–3 leading candidates in the race (e.g. for the US election, Trump and Clinton), plus a series of other election-related issues (see "The dataset beyond candidates' personality" section). I discuss in this article only results for candidates for which at least two[2] different experts provided independent evaluations. This concerns information for 124 candidates having competed in 57 elections worldwide, based on answers provided by 1030 experts (Appendix A). Data collection is currently under way, and future releases of the dataset will include all elections that happened from March 2018 onwards (e.g. for 2018, Hungary, Colombia, Malaysia, Turkey, Mexico, Pakistan, Mali, Zimbabwe, Sweden, Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, the US midterm elections, and more). I plan to release an updated cumulative version of the dataset at the end of each year. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the geographical coverage of the 1.0 release of NEG^{ex}.

[1] https://www.alessandro-nai.com/negative-campaigning-comparative-data.

[2] I replicated all analyses presented in this article with a more restrictive condition (minimum five independent experts per candidate); results, available upon request, are very similar.

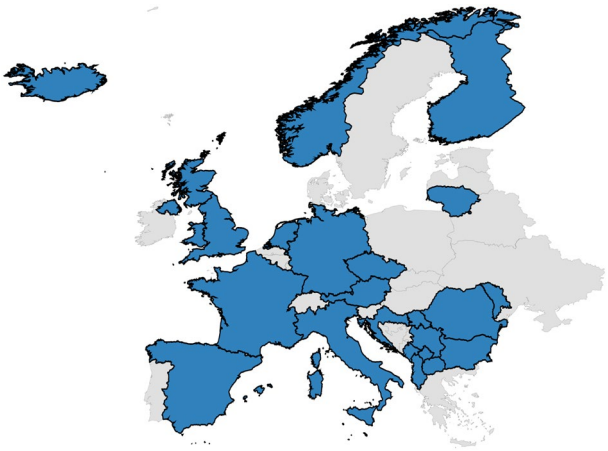

Fig. 2 Dataset current coverage: Europe map

The experts

In my operational definition, an "expert" is a scholar with expertise in electoral politics, political communication (including political journalism), and/or electoral behaviour, or related disciplines, for the country where the election was held. I established expertise via the presence of one of the following criteria: (1) relevant academic publications (including conference papers); (2) holding a chair in those disciplines in a department within the country; (3) membership of a relevant research group, professional network, or organized section of such a group; (4) explicit self-assessed expertise in professional webpage (e.g. bio in university webpage). The number of answers gathered for each election varied, depending on the specific case studied; the average response rate was approximately 20% (Table A2 in Appendix presents the number of responses gathered to measure the personality of each candidate). I contacted experts during the week following the election and invited them to fill an online questionnaire through *Qualtrics*. They received two reminders, respectively, one and two weeks afterwards. On average the 1,030 experts in the database (that is, those who provided responses about the candidates that I describe in this article) lean slightly to the left on a 0–10 left–right scale ($M = 4.34$, SD = 1.79), 77% are domestic (that is, work in the country for which they evaluated the election), and 33% are female. Overall, experts felt very familiar with the election they had to evaluate ($M = 8.03$, SD = 1.76), and estimated that the questions in the survey were relatively easy to answer ($M = 6.54$, SD = 2.39); both variables vary between 0 "very low" and 10 "very high".

The profile of experts can, potentially, alter their assessments (Steenbergen and Marks 2007; Curini 2010; Martínez i Coma and Van Ham 2015). With this in mind, I ran two sets of robustness checks. First, I ran a series of models where the experts' personality evaluations (that is, how they evaluate the personality profile of the candidates) are regressed on their profile; results show that expert ratings are very rarely

driven by their profile, and even when a significant effect exists, its magnitude is extremely marginal (this is, for instance, the case for the effect of familiarity on conscientiousness; Tables D1 and D2 in Appendix D). Second, to ensure that even such small variations do not affect the average personality scores of candidates, I replicated all analyses in this article controlling for the average expert profile; in this case as well, I can exclude the presence of profile biases (see Tables D3 to D8 in Appendix D). Finally, one could argue that experts unconsciously evaluate candidates differently depending on their electoral performance, for instance, by providing more favourable ratings to winners. To assess the extent of this issue, I ran an additional series of models where the main analyses are replicated for losing candidates only; results are overall consistent with the main ones (see Tables D9 to D12 in Appendix D).

Measuring candidates' personality

Usually, scholars measure the different dimensions of human personality through self-ratings where respondents answer batteries of questions intended to measure each trait and facet of their personality. This is, however, an impossible task when it comes to high-ranking political figures (except in very rare and circumstantial cases; see Dietrich et al. 2012; Joly et al. 2018; Nørgaard and Klemmensen 2018), who cannot be expected to participate to scholarly studies intended to measure their psychological profile. Some scholars rely on psychohistoric analyses of secondary data (e.g. content analysis of political speeches; Winter 1987), which is, however, suboptimal for large-scale comparative studies and suffers from questionable cross-cultural comparability. An alternative approach is to rely on external expert observers to draw a psychological profile of political figures (Rubenzer et al. 2000; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004; Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Gallagher and Blackstone 2015; Visser et al. 2017; Nai and Maier 2018). Using expert judgments is an efficient and reliable solution to gather systematic information about the personality of candidates. Data gathering is fast and cost-effective. Furthermore, relying on scholars with proven expertise allows to dramatically expand the coverage of the data (for instance, in the current release of the dataset, 57 elections in almost as many countries). Finally, the quality of measures obtained via expert judgments can be assessed empirically and adjusted, for instance, considering the experts' profile. In below, I provide several pieces of evidence suggesting that my personality measures are empirically reliable and theoretically valid, including preliminary evidence showing that experts perceive candidates similarly than does the public at large, suggesting that the trends described here can be translated into the population at large.

I asked the experts in my database to evaluate candidates in terms of both "socially desirable" (Big Five) and "socially malevolent" traits (Dark Triad). Table 1 presents the eight traits at a glance. I measured the five "socially desirable" traits through the Ten Items Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling et al. 2003), which provides satisfactory results in terms of convergent validity (Ehrhart et al. 2009). For each trait, experts had to evaluate two statements (e.g. the candidate might be someone that is "critical, quarrelsome") and the underlying personality trait exists

Table 1 Socially benevolent and malevolent personality traits at a glance

Category	Trait	Profile
Socially benevolent (Big Five)		
E	Extraversion	Energy, assertiveness, likeability, sociability, social dominance. Leading to charismatic leadership
A	Agreeableness	Cooperative and pro-social behaviours, conflict avoidance, tolerance. Associated with positive, warm, and sympathetic images
C	Conscientiousness	Discipline, responsibility, achievement orientation, dependability, proclivity for organization and planning, perseverance
Es	Emotional stability	Calm, detachment, low emotional distress, and anxiety
O	Openness	Curiosity, a tendency to make new experiences
Socially malevolent (Dark Triad)		
N	Narcissism	Ego reinforcement behaviours, tendency to seek attention and admiration. Bombastic behaviours of self-promotion
P	Psychopathy	Lack of remorse, insensitivity, impulsivity, boldness, social dominance. Leads to success in "adaptive niches" of society where individualism is rewarded (e.g. business, politics)
M	Machiavellianism	Tendency to use manipulation and strategic behaviours

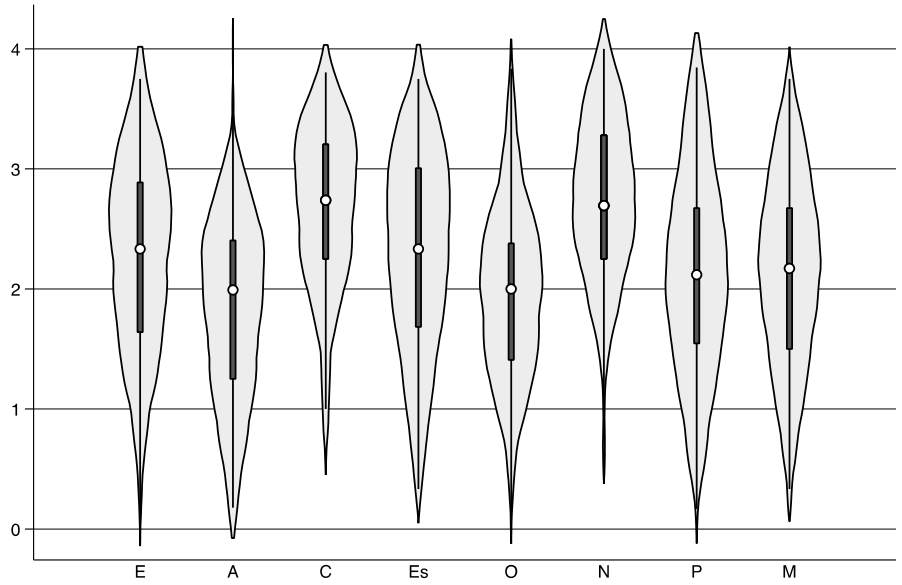

Fig. 3 Distribution of the eight personality traits (all candidates). All personality traits vary between 0 "very low" and 4 "very high". $N = 124$. *E* Extraversion; *A* Agreeableness; *C* Conscientiousness; *Es* Emotional Stability; *O* Openness; *N* Narcissism; *P* Psychopathy; *M* Machiavellianism

as the average value for those statements. To measure the "dark" personality traits, I designed a shorter version of the "Dirty Dozen" (D12) battery discussed in Jonason and Webster (2010; see also Jonason and Luévano 2013). Starting from the principal component analyses described in their study (2010: 422), I selected the two items that correlate the highest with each trait in their results and used them as a battery. In this case as well, the underlying trait exists as an average value for two separate statements that experts had to evaluate. All personality variables range from 0 "very low" to 4 "very high". Appendix B describes the exact wording for the two personality batteries used in my expert survey. Figure 3 illustrates the central distribution of the eight personal traits for all 124 candidates in the 1.0 release of the NEG^{ex} database; the figure shows that the personality scores of the candidates know a relatively high variation across the sample, and that candidates seem to score slightly higher on conscientiousness (in line with trends for Danish MPs found in Nørgaard and Klemmensen 2018) and narcissism than they do on other traits.

Reliability and validity checks

For the eight traits, I find high reliability[3] and construct consistency. Studies suggest the existence of specific patterns when looking at the relationship between the Big Five and Dark Triad traits—for instance, agreeableness correlates negative with

[3] $\alpha = 0.74$ (extraversion), $\alpha = 0.66$ (agreeableness), $\alpha = 0.78$ (conscientiousness), $\alpha = 0.84$ (emotional stability), $\alpha = 0.63$ (openness), $\alpha = 0.86$ (narcissism), $\alpha = 0.89$ (psychopathy), $\alpha = 0.78$ (Machiavellianism).

all the three "dark" traits, conscientiousness is negatively associated with psychopathy and Machiavellianism, and narcissism is positively associated with extraversion (Paulhus and Williams 2002). I find those patterns in my data as well.

External validity of my measures is harder to assess, due to the absence of comparable data. However, I show elsewhere (Nai and Maier 2018) that my scores for Clinton and Trump match the profile established by scholars having published in the psychology of personality (Visser et al. 2017). In both studies, experts evaluated Clinton as average on extraversion, agreeableness, openness, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, but high on conscientiousness and emotional stability, while Trump was portrayed as very low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, average on openness, and very high on extraversion and the Dark Triad. This suggests high validity for my measures in this specific case. Similar data for all remaining candidates in my dataset do not exist unfortunately; instead, for 45 candidates, I compiled information about their public personas as described in news media, reports, and scientific publications. Overall, the image of candidates that emerges from this information aligns closely with my measures (see Table B5 in Appendix B). For instance, getting back to the remaining examples described in the introduction, I find in my data very low extraversion and agreeableness for Theresa May, high conscientiousness and stability, and low scores on the Dark Triad, but also quite low agreeableness, extraversion, and openness for Angela Merkel, and very low agreeableness for Geert Wilders. Other examples include Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a colourful candidate in recent Russian elections described in turn as "the insane clown prince of Russian politics" (Bruk 2013), "Russia's Trump" (Nemtsova 2016), and one of "the usual nut-jobs" (Simpson 2012; I find sky-high extraversion and extremely low agreeableness coupled with high narcissism), Austria's Norbert Hofer described as "a wolf in sheep's clothing […that learned] how to play nice" (MacKinnon 2017; I find high Machiavellianism), and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega described by a former colleague as having "a prison personality: lonely, solitary, mistrustful, hard" (Vulliamy 2001; I find very low levels of extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness).

In late 2017, I asked two convenience samples of undergraduate students in communication science at the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands) to evaluate four candidates using the same batteries used in my expert survey: in a first study, 275 students evaluated the personality of Donald Trump, and in a second study 200 students evaluated the personality of two main Dutch political figures (the current PM Mark Rutte and the populist leader of the PVV Geert Wilders) and the personality of Angela Merkel. Experts and students evaluated these four candidates very consistently, as both sets of scores are significantly and strongly correlated (Trump $R = 0.97$; Rutte $= 0.76$; Wilders $R = 0.85$; Merkel $R = 0.89$; See Table B4 in Appendix B). This suggests high external validity for the question batteries to measure the personality of political figures, which seem to produce consistent results across different observers, time, and space.

We know today that voters tend to evaluate the personality reputation of political figures with a more simplified profile than the one they would apply to themselves. For instance, Caprara et al. (2007) show that voters perceive political figures along two main dimensions: friendliness, conscientiousness, and

emotional stability on the one side, and energy/extraversion and openness on the other. These two dimensions appear to work as "evaluative anchors and filters for making sense of personal information about political candidates" (Caprara et al. 2007: 394). Results of a principal components factor analysis (PCA) on my data reveal the existence of two orthogonal underlying dimensions, explaining, respectively, 48.7% (Factor 1) and 20.2% (Factor 2) of the variance (see Figure B1 in Appendix B). Interpretation of the two underlying dimensions aligns very closely with what Caprara et al. (2007) discussed: their dimension of friendliness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability is close to Factor 1 in my data (plus the reversed effect of the three "malevolent" traits), and their dimension of energy/extraversion and openness is close to Factor 2. Beyond providing an additional validity check for my data, this suggests that external observers (experts, but also voters) tend to conflate similar traits along major underlying dimensions when assessing the personality of other individuals. Bittner (2011, 2015) suggests that voters perceive the personality of political figures through the simplified schemata of "competence" and "character", which seem in line with the two dimensions described above.

Personality matters

Relevant measures should be able to say something meaningful about social and political dynamics. With this in mind, I briefly discuss here three sets of analyses that I use to highlight the empirical and theoretical relevance of my personality measures. I first assess whether populists differ from non-populists in terms of personality reputation, then the extent to which candidates with certain personality profiles are more likely to go "negative" and "emotional" during their electoral campaigns, and finally whether personality is associated with electoral success. Spoiler alert: the answer is an unequivocal "yes" for all three questions. Both the populist nature of candidates and their electoral success are exogenous constructs measured independently from my data, and thus, any association between those constructs and my personality measures suggest that differences in personality traits across candidates are not due to chance. It cannot be excluded that the behaviour of candidates influences the way experts perceive their personality. Several studies rely, as I do, on ratings from expert external observers to explicitly measure the "personality" of political figures, understood as a set of internal psychological constructs (e.g. Visser et al. 2017; Rubenzer et al. 2000; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004; Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Gallagher and Blackstone 2015). Yet, empirical evidence confirming that the psychological traits of political figures are consistently aligned with the personality assessments drawn from external observers and peers is scarce—although more frequent in studies of the general public (McCrae 1994; Mount et al. 1994). In my case, although I can confidently exclude the presence of major biases due to the profile of experts, it might still be the case that ultimately the causality between personality and political behaviours discussed in the

following sections is more complex than suggested. The discussion of results in the next sections reflects this caution.

The personality traits of populist and non-populists

Populism—often described as symptom or cause of increasing public disaffection with politics and entrenched suspicion about democratic procedures—is central in the contemporary narrative about the alleged "crisis" of democratic institutions (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Beyond their potential disruptive role for politics as usual, many observers often portray populists as unique political animals—thus suggesting that they somehow differ from "mainstream" candidates in terms of personality profile. For instance, some describe populists as "drunken dinner guest[s]" (Arditi 2007: 78) that take pleasure in displaying "bad manners" (Moffitt 2016) and adopt a political style that "emphasizes agitation, spectacular acts, exaggeration, calculated provocations, and the intended breech of political and sociocultural taboos" (Heinisch 2003: 94). At the same time, populists are associated with qualities of leadership and charisma, used to mobilize their followers via their energetic, emotional, and bold political style (van der Brug and Mughan 2007). All in all, strong reasons exist to expect that populist candidates have a style of their own, which makes them stand out in terms of personality profile—and, perhaps, explain their electoral success (or lack thereof).

With my dataset, it is easy to verify this intuition. A simple comparison between the median profile of populists and non-populists[4] (Fig. 4) shows stark contrasts. Populists (bottom panel) score lower than non-populists (upper panel) in perceived agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability—in line with the narrative portraying them as bad-mannered "drunken dinner guests" (Arditi 2007; Moffitt 2016)—but score substantially higher in perceived extraversion, narcissism, and psychopathy—in line with the narrative that portrays them as charismatic leaders. They are also higher in perceived Machiavellianism, supporting the idea that populists are calculated provocateurs (Heinisch 2003) that *intendedly* disrupt politics as usual.

I regressed the candidates' score on the eight personality traits on a simple binary variable that sorts out populists form all other candidates to assess whether these differences are statistically significant, and whether they are robust when controlling for a series of covariates both at the candidate (incumbency status, ideology, age, gender) and at the election levels (competitiveness, electoral system, effective number of competing candidates, type of election, geographical region). Tables C1 and C2 in Appendix C present the full results, respectively, for the five socially benevolent and the three socially malevolent traits. Ceteris paribus, the difference between populists and mainstream candidates is unquestionable. Except for openness, all

[4] To identify populist candidates, I referred to existing comparative work (e.g., Mudde 2007), systematic collections of case studies (e.g., Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008), and single case studies. I provide more details in Nai (2018a). Table A2 in appendix marks the candidates identified as populists with ** in front of their name.

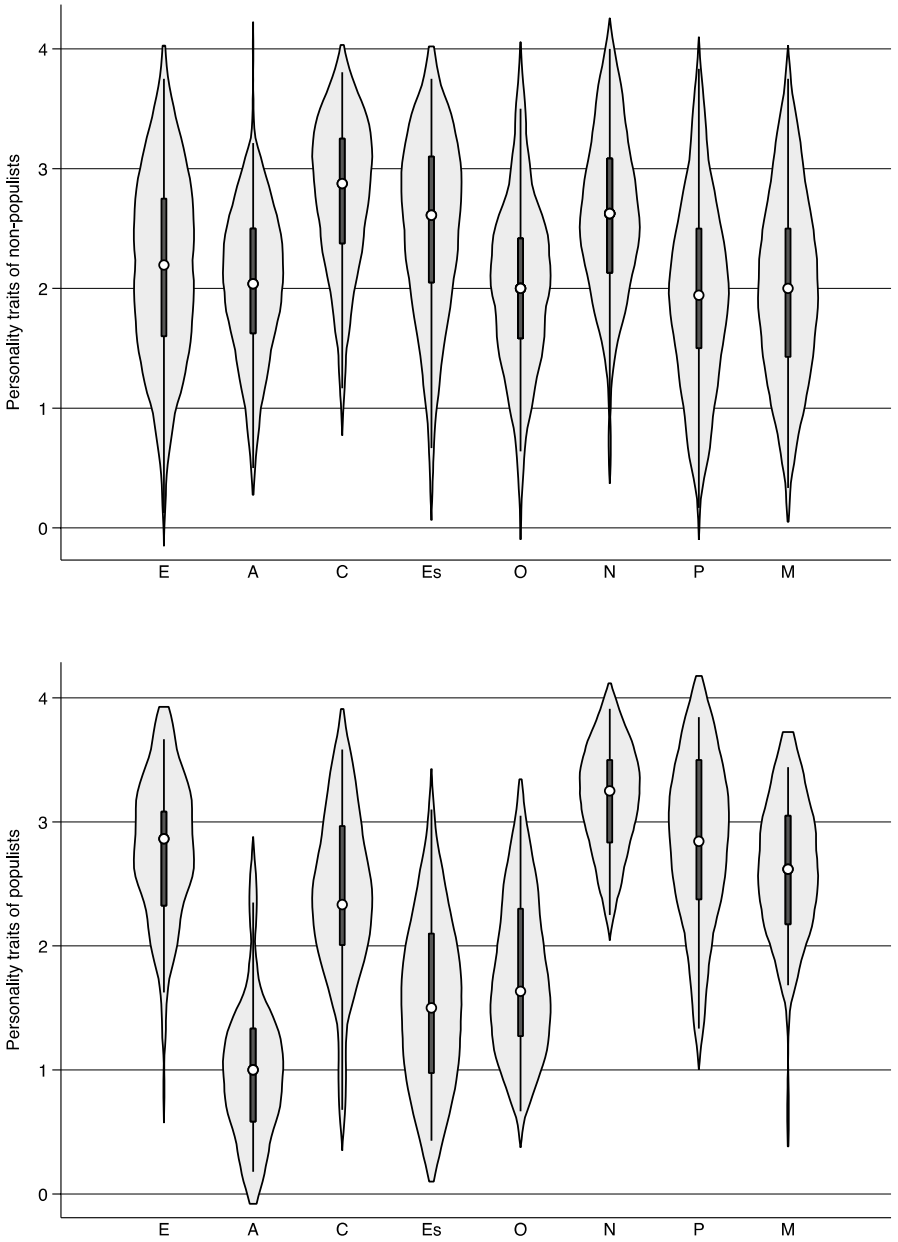

Fig. 4 Distribution of the eight personality traits, for non-populists (top panel) and populist candidates (bottom panel). All personality traits vary between 0 "very low" and 4 "very high". $N = 97$ (non-populists, upper panel), $N = 27$ (populists, bottom panel). *E* Extraversion; *A* Agreeableness; *C* Conscientiousness; *Es* Emotional Stability; *O* Openness; *N* Narcissism; *P* Psychopathy; *M* Machiavellianism

personality traits—both socially benevolent and malevolent—differ significantly between the two.

Going "negative" and "emotional"

The personality of political figures should also translate into distinctive communication styles. Certainly, agreeable people should be less likely to use a harsh and fearful rhetoric—it would contrast with their image and thus potentially backlash—whereas people scoring high on the "socially malevolent" traits should be less likely to have such scruples. Narcissist should be more likely to use campaigns with a "positively valenced" tone, that is, campaigns that focus on themselves and not the opponents. The NEG^{ex} dataset allows me to test for this assumption as it contains several measures for the candidates' campaign tone (negativity of their campaign, use of personal attacks; Lau and Pomper 2004; Nai and Walter 2015; Nai 2018a, b) and use of emotional messages (fear and enthusiasm appeals; Brader 2006; Ridout and Searles 2011; Nai 2018a). To test for this assumption, I regressed these four communication strategies on the candidates' personality profile (Big Five and Dark Triad, in two separate set of analyses to account for the fact that the two sets of personality traits are often intertwined), plus all controls used beforehand at the candidate and election levels (including the difference between populists and mainstream candidates). Figures 5 and 6 (coefficient plots) substantiate the main effects of the eight personality traits on the four communication strategies; Tables C3 and C4 in Appendix C present the full results.

Again, personality matters. Looking first at the Big Five (Fig. 5), candidates high in agreeableness and openness are significantly and substantially less likely to use a negative tone, character attacks over policy attacks, and fear appeals; they are, however, significantly more likely to use enthusiasm appeals. Extraverted, probably due to the "social boldness" associated with this trait (De Hoogh et al. 2005), are more likely to take risks and use character attacks, contrarily to candidates perceived as high in conscientiousness.

Turning to the Dark Triad (Fig. 6), candidates perceived high in psychopathy are substantially and significantly more likely to use harsh campaigns characterized by high negativity, character attacks and fear appeals, and a low use of positive emotional appeals (enthusiasm). To be sure, it could be that the candidates' communication style participates in building their personality (e.g. candidates that constantly attack are perceived as less agreeable and higher in psychopathy); at the individual level, research suggests that personality traits determine the rhetoric style adopted (de Vries et al. 2013)—but the direction of the causality for candidates is impossible to confirm with my data. It seems nonetheless undeniable that candidates' personality is intertwined with the way they communicate to the public and try to get their message across. Further research that integrates a personality and a communicational approach seems necessary, and the dataset introduced in this article provides new tools in this sense.

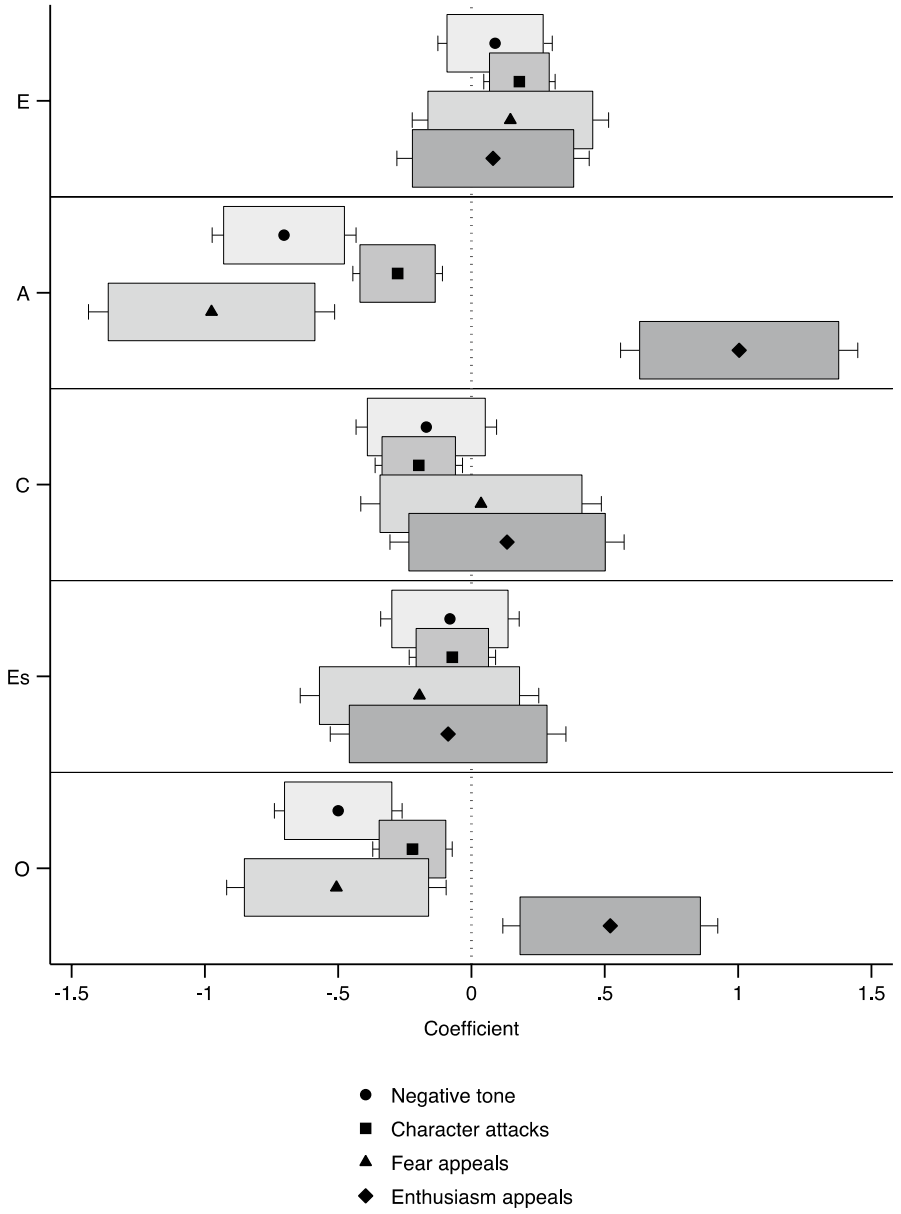

Fig. 5 Big Five and communication style (coefficient plots). *Note*: full results are presented in Table C3 in Appendix C. Confidence intervals are presented at both 90% (boxes) and 95% (capped whiskers) levels. "Negative tone" ranges from 1 "completely positive" to 7 "completely negative". "Character attacks" ranges from 1 "exclusively policy attacks" to 5 "exclusively character attacks". "Fear appeals" and "enthusiasm appeals" range from 0 "very low use" to 10 "very high use". *E* Extraversion; *A* Agreeableness; *C* Conscientiousness; *Es* Emotional Stability; *O* Openness

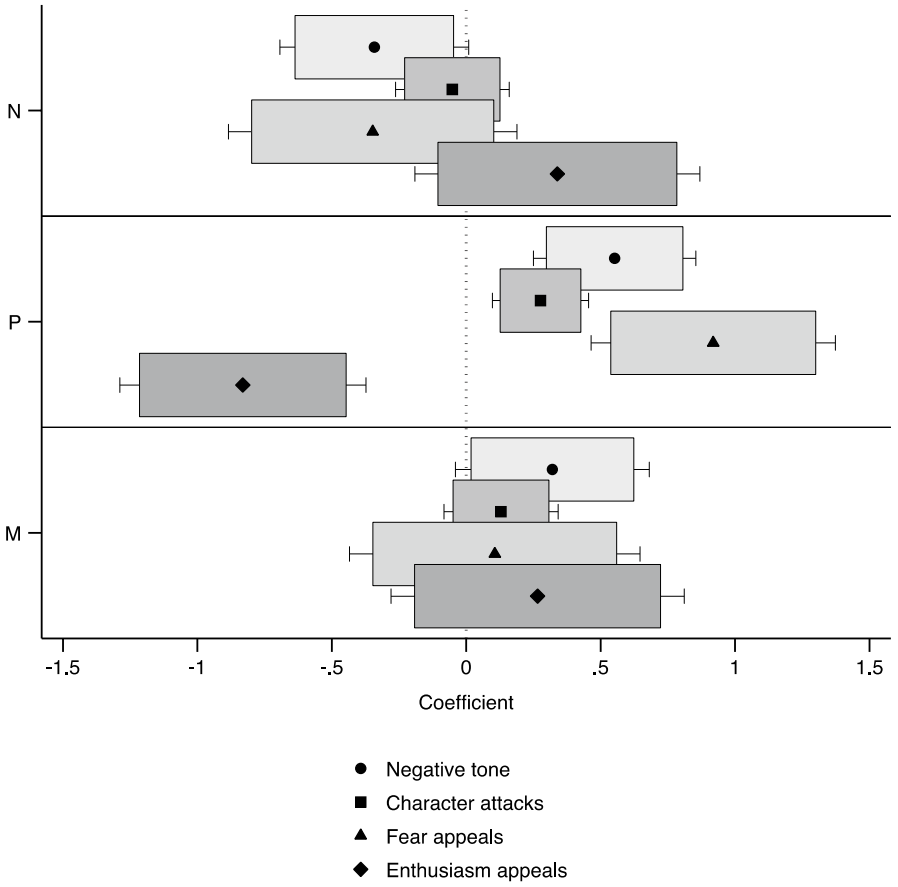

Fig. 6 Dark Triad and communication style (coefficient plots). *Note*: full results are presented in Table C4 in Appendix C. Confidence intervals are presented at both 90% (boxes) and 95% (capped whiskers) levels. "Negative tone" ranges from 1 "completely positive" to 7 "completely negative". "Character attacks" ranges from 1 "exclusively policy attacks" to 5 "exclusively character attacks". "Fear appeals" and "enthusiasm appeals" range from 0 "very low use" to 10 "very high use". *N* Narcissism; *P* Psychopathy; *M* Machiavellianism

Personality traits and electoral success

But it is on electoral results that the personality of candidates should be particularly relevant. If, as many suggest, voters increasingly rely on candidates' style over substance—that is, on who they are and not what they propose—to form their judgments, then the candidates' personality should be associated with their electoral fortunes. To test for this assumption, I regressed the electoral performance[5] of candidates on their score on the eight reputation traits (in separate

[5] Percentage of votes won by candidates (or their party, if legislative election); all models control for the effective number of candidates to exclude spuriousness. I replicated the analyses for two alternative measures (relative success and difference with average score), with very similar results. I discuss more details about this issue in Nai (2018c). See full results in Appendix D.

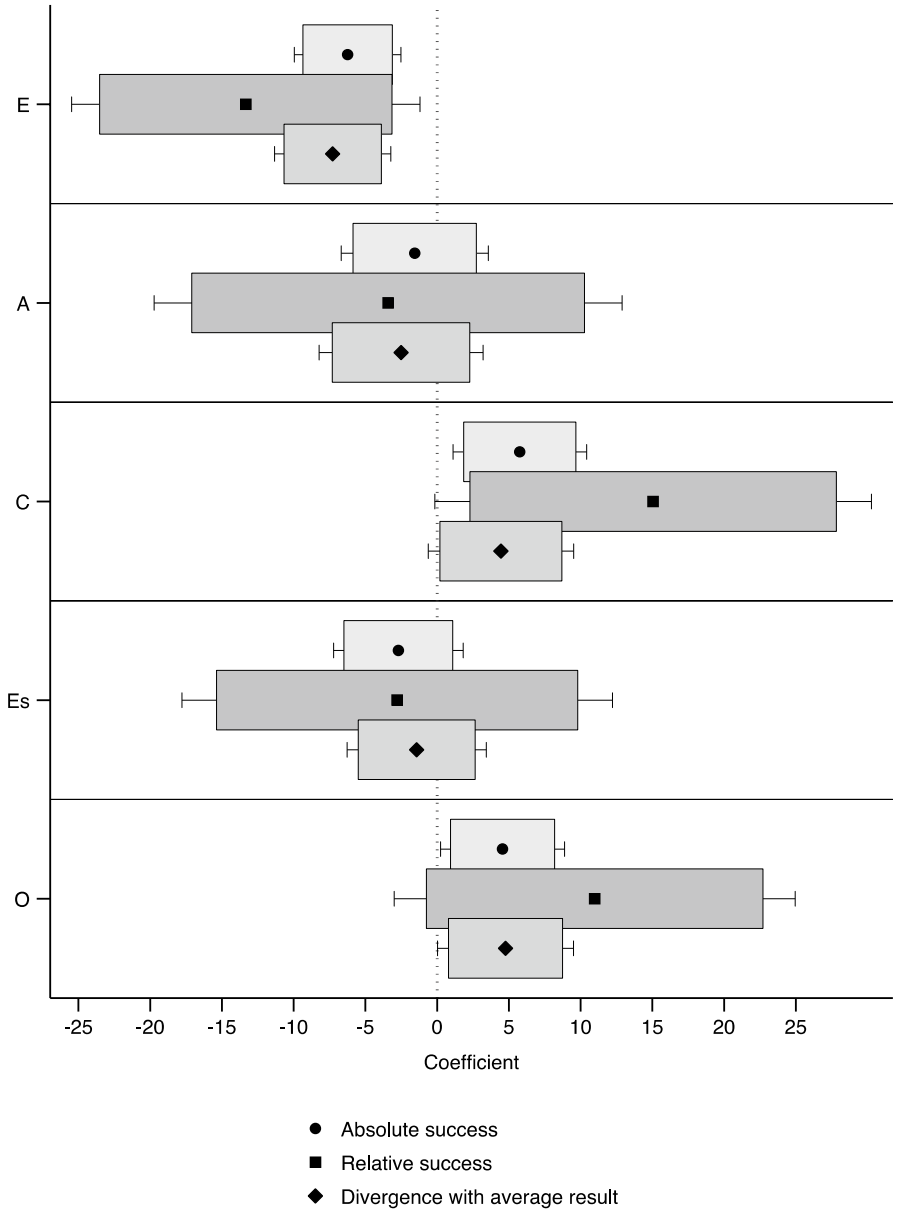

Fig. 7 Big Five and electoral success (coefficient plots). *Note*: full results are presented in Table C5 in Appendix C. Confidence intervals are presented at both 90% (boxes) and 95% (capped whiskers) levels. "Absolute success" is measured as the percentage of votes the candidate received in the election (ratio between number of votes for the candidate and total number of valid votes cast). "Relative success" is measured as the ratio between the percentage of votes for the candidate and the "average" percentage that a candidate should have received (100%/number of effective candidates). Thus, a relative success of 250 means that the candidate received 2.5 times the votes of the average candidate in that election. "Divergence with the average result" is calculated as (100%/number of effective candidates). Thus, a divergence of 15 means that the candidate received 15% of votes more than the "average" candidate. *E* Extraversion; *A* Agreeableness; *C* Conscientiousness; *Es* Emotional Stability; *O* Openness

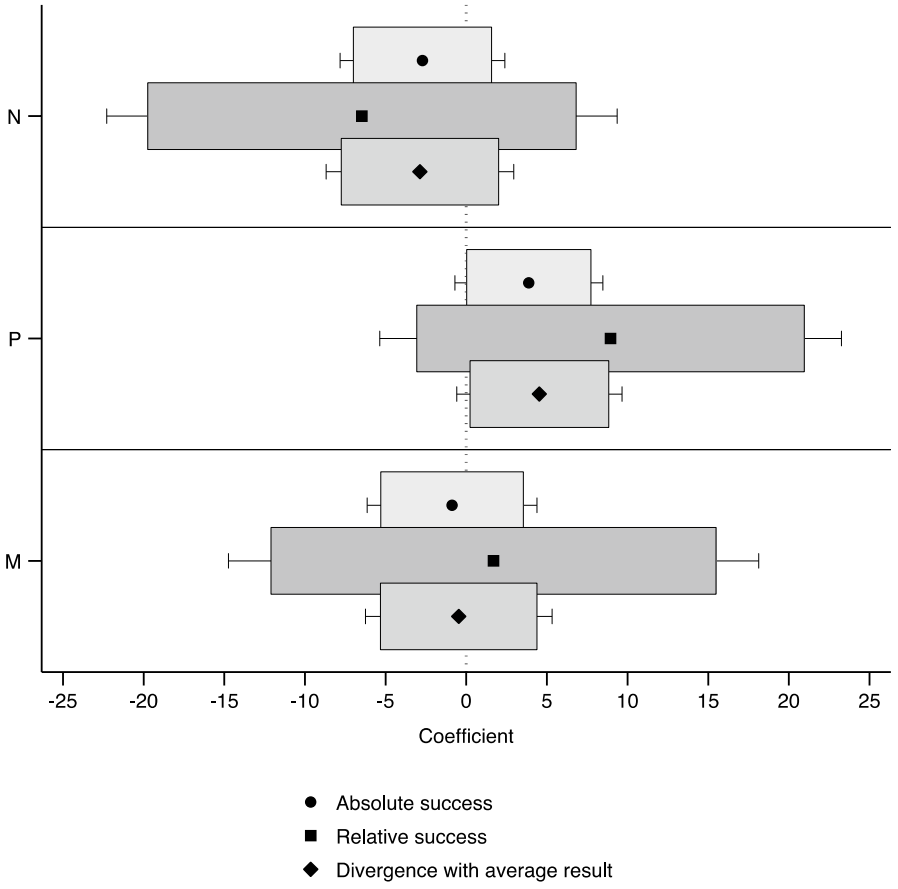

Fig. 8 Dark Triad and electoral success (coefficient plots). *Note*: full results are presented in Table C6 in Appendix C. Confidence intervals are presented at both 90% (boxes) and 95% (capped whiskers) levels. "Absolute success" is measured as the percentage of votes the candidate received in the election (ratio between number of votes for the candidate and total number of valid votes cast). "Relative success" is measured as the ratio between the percentage of votes for the candidate and the "average" percentage that a candidate should have received (100%/number of effective candidates). Thus, a relative success of 250 means that the candidate received 2.5 times the votes of the average candidate in that election. "Divergence with the average result" is calculated as (100%/number of effective candidates). Thus, a divergence of 15 means that the candidate received 15% of votes more than the "average" candidate. *N* Narcissism; *P* Psychopathy; *M* Machiavellianism

analyses for the Big Five and Dark Triad), plus the same covariates used in the previous analyses (including the four dimensions of their campaigning style). As in the previous section, I present here the effects substantiated with coefficient plots (Figs. 7, 8); Tables C5 and C6 in Appendix C present the full results.

Looking first at the Big Five (Fig. 7), three "socially benevolent" traits are associated with electoral results. First, high conscientiousness is associated with a higher success; conscientiousness signals an orientation towards achievement,

dependability, and a proclivity for organization and planning (Judge et al. 1999; Seibert and Kraimer 2001; Hochwarter et al. 2000), and thus, voters are likely to perceive conscientious candidates as serious, perseverant and dependable, and to reward them accordingly. Conscientious individuals show constraint in social interactions, which lead them towards more successful professional trajectories in terms of, e.g. higher salary (Barrick and Mount 1991) or better job performance (Salgado 1997). Studies have shown that conscientious individuals perform particularly well in challenging situations, where their predisposition for perseverance and discipline makes it easier for them to recognize and overcome the obstacles on their path (Hochwarter et al. 2000). This is also the case, in my results, for openness, although perhaps slightly less intensely; retrospective evaluations of former US Presidents show a strong association between their openness and independent measures of "historical greatness" (Rubenzer et al. 2000). On the other hand, high extraversion seems counterproductive; extraverted are dynamic and tend to engage in social interactions in a bolder and unflinching way (De Hoogh et al. 2005), which is perhaps perceived as not serious enough to lead in political offices—this is, for instance, what many observers reproached to populist candidates, which usually score quite high on extraversion.

The Dark Triad does not seem to be substantially associated with electoral success (Fig. 8). I do find a slight positive association for perceived psychopathy—suggesting that candidates high in this trait have perhaps a comparative advantage expressed in terms of social dominance and boldness (Babiak and Hare 2006), which are rewarded in individualistic circumstances such as business (Boddy et al. 2010) or politics (Lilienfeld et al. 2012)[6]—but the effect is outside the realm of statistical significance and rather weak. All in all, the socially benevolent traits seem to matter more for electoral success than their socially malevolent counterparts, at least directly.

Beyond these direct effects, the comparative nature of the dataset allows also test whether the importance of personality traits is a function of situational differences, that is, to what extent variables at the contextual and institutional level act as moderators. To explore this question, I added to the models discussed above a series of interaction terms between the eight personality traits and four contextual variables: the competitiveness of the election, the electoral system (PR vs. FPTP), the fragmentation of the party system, and the type of election (presidential vs. legislative). Tables C7 and C8 in Appendix C present the full results, respectively, for the Big Five and Dark Triad.

These additional models reveal a handful of scattered effects concerning the interactions between the Big Five and the context (Table C7). For instance, extraversion, negatively associated with electoral performance, seems even more harmful during non-competitive elections. When the winner is already known beforehand, extroversion seems to be a particularly unsuited character trait—for both winners and losers; otherwise said, extraversion seems associated with poor electoral performance, except in cases of great electoral competitiveness. But it is for the "socially

[6] In a study of Belgian elected officials, Joly et al. (2018) find that low agreeableness is consistently associated with electoral success, which echoes my trends found for psychopathic traits.

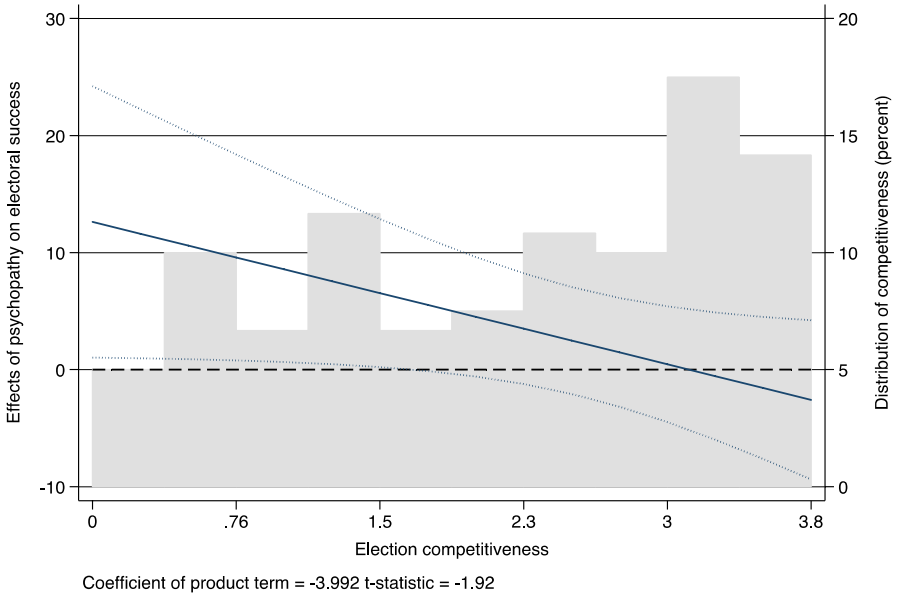

Fig. 9 Electoral success by psychopathy * election competitiveness; marginal effects. *Note*: marginal effects with 95% CI, based on coefficients in Table C8 (model M1). The y-axis represents the effect of psychopathy on electoral success

malevolent" personality traits that contextual differences seem to matter, and more specifically for psychopathy. This trait interacts significantly with election competitiveness in models explaining electoral success.

Figure 9 substantiates the interaction via marginal effects and shows that the effect of psychopathy on electoral success is positive and significant during non-competitive elections. A similar effect exists also for elections fought between a comparatively smaller effective number of candidates. Finally, psychopathy and electoral success seem especially related during presidential election. Figure 10 substantiates again the interaction via marginal effects and shows that leadership contests where the candidate is at the centre of the battle for office—elections for the higher executive function—create conditions where candidates perceived as high in psychopathy are more likely to know a more successful outcome; the relationship between psychopathy and electoral success in legislative elections is virtually inexistent.

Conclusion

The increasing personalization of contemporary politics means that candidates' characteristics beyond their political profile often become relevant (Bittner and Peterson 2018), although more sceptical voices do exist (e.g. King 2002; Curtice and Holmberg 2005). Without necessarily arguing that style *is* substance, personality goes a long way. Filling a gap in existing research, I introduced in this article a

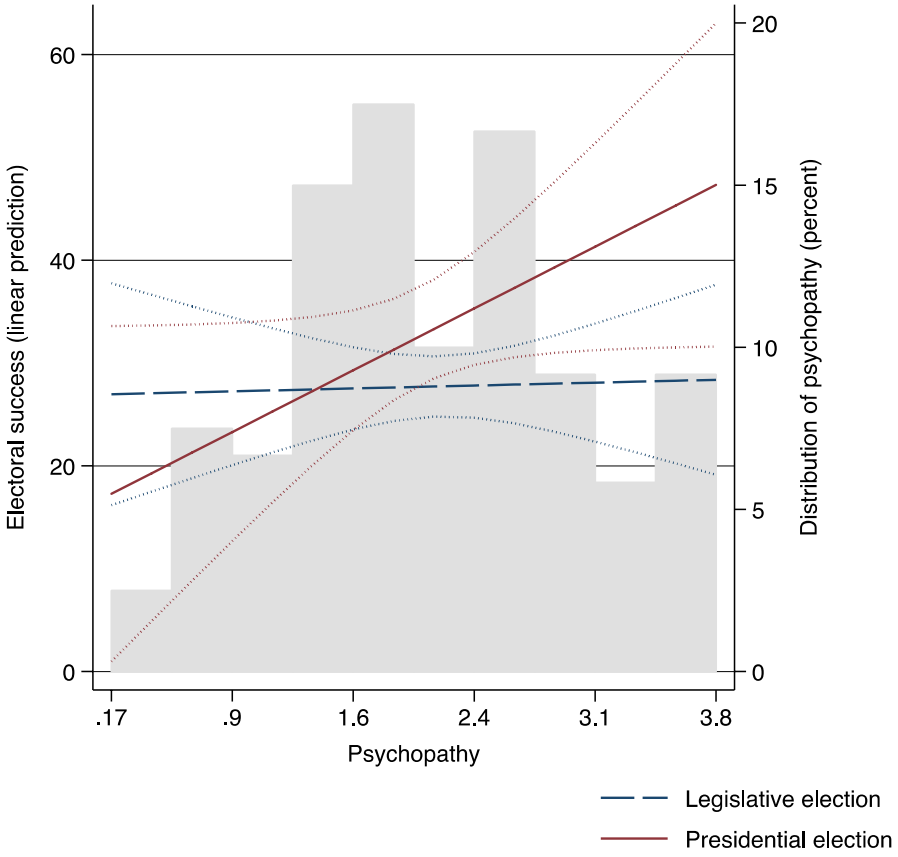

Fig. 10 Electoral success by psychopathy * election type; marginal effects. *Note*: marginal effects with 95% CI, based on coefficients in Table C8 (model M4)

new dataset that contains information about the personality of candidates competing in elections worldwide, based on expert ratings. The core of this article was to discuss two integrated sets of personality reputation variables, based on the most recent advances in research in personality and individual differences: a "benevolent" set of traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness), and a "malevolent" one (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism).

The article discussed the reliability and construct consistency of my measures, and provided evidence suggesting that my measures of personality are externally valid: the trends in my data match overall with the (scattered) existing evidence. All this suggests that my measures do a satisfactory job in capturing the candidates' personality and thus contribute to the existing research due to the systematic and large-scale comparative scope of the dataset. I also discussed three sets of analyses aimed at assessing the *relevance* of my measures. I showed (1) that populist candidates have a substantially different personality profile than mainstream candidates—they score significantly lower in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional

Table 2 Dataset at a glance (selection)

Category	Concepts	Variables	Measured for..	
			Cand.	Elect.
Campaigning	Negative campaigning	Tone of the campaign (positive–negative)	✓	✓
		Type of attacks (policy vs. character)	✓	✓
		Target of attacks	✓	✓
		Issue of attacks	✓	✓
		Uncivil attacks		✓
		Defences against attacks		✓
		Irrelevant and relevant attacks		✓
	Emotional campaigning	Fear appeals	✓	✓
		Enthusiasm appeals	✓	✓
	Populist communication	Anti-elitism	✓	
		People-centrism	✓	
		Simple language (anti-intellectualism)	✓	
		Respect towards the adversaries	✓	
Personality	Big Five	Extraversion	✓	
		Agreeableness	✓	
		Conscientiousness	✓	
		Emotional stability	✓	
		Openness	✓	
	Dark Triad	Narcissism	✓	
		Psychopathy	✓	
		Machiavellianism	✓	
Media	Focus	Media coverage	✓	
		Attention to candidates		✓
		Attention to policy issues		✓
		Attention to attacks		✓
		Attention to the electoral campaign		✓
		Attention to the sensational side of news		✓
	Quality	Media represents all opinion		✓
		Media provides an accurate coverage of politics		✓
		A few corporations own all media		✓
		Media reflects all major political divisions		✓
		Media face strong commercial pressure		✓
Election	Saliency	Voters were exposed to much political information		✓
		The public was interested in the race		✓
		Competitiveness of the race		✓
		The campaign was longer than usual		✓

The table presents a selection of variables measured through expert judgments; additional metadata related to the candidates, the election, and the country (e.g. candidate profile, electoral results, electoral system in the country) are also in the dataset

stability, but higher in perceived extraversion, narcissism, and psychopathy—than "mainstream" candidates, (2) that candidates high in agreeableness and openness seem to be associated with campaigns that are less negative and harsh and rather use positively valenced appeals, whereas extroverted tend to be associated more with character attacks, and (3) that high conscientiousness and openness are associated with electoral success, extraversion might be counterproductive, and psychopathy is associated with greater success in presidential election and non-competitive contests.

The dataset beyond candidates' personality

The personality of candidates is, by far, not the only set of variables in the dataset. I also asked experts to evaluate the campaigning strategies of all candidates, for instance, in terms of their use of negative campaigning or emotional appeals (fear and enthusiasm messages; Nai 2018a, b). I also asked experts several questions concerning the election itself, for instance, in terms of saliency and competitiveness, and about media coverage of the election (media framing, infotainment, media negativity, media balance, and so forth). It is important to note that the personality variables only exist for a subset of candidates for each election (124 candidates in total, as discussed in this article)—whereas *all* other variables exist for a far greater number of candidates. For instance, the 1.0 release of the NEG^{ex} dataset contains information about the campaigning strategies (negativity, emotionality) of 373 candidates having competed in these elections. I used some of these variables in the three analyses discussed above, but many more are available. Table 2 presents an overview of the most important variables in the dataset.

Of course, the dataset also includes metadata about the candidates, elections, and countries under observations (e.g. candidate profile and electoral results, electoral system in the country, and so forth), and about the average profile of experts that evaluated them. Finally, as mentioned before, it is worth stressing again that data gathering will continue at least for the foreseeable future. Future releases of the dataset will include all elections that happened worldwide from March 2018 onwards, thus expanding exponentially both the scope of the dataset and the possibilities for comparative and fine-grained studies on personality, campaigning, media, and electoral dynamics more broadly.

Acknowledgements I am very grateful to the anonymous reviewers and the journal editors for their constructive comments and suggestions; any remaining mistakes are my responsibility alone. I acknowledge financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant ref P300P1_161163) and the material support provided by the Electoral Integrity Project (Harvard and University of Sydney), with special thanks to Pippa Norris for her input.

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